

## **Main Street Reisterstown Program Minutes**

**Location/Date:** Reter's Crabhouse, Reisterstown - December 17, 2012

**Attendees:** Amy Mantay, Glenn Barnes, Mary Molinaro, Calvin Reter, Amy Menzer, Shirley Smith, Kathy Gambrell, Paul Davolos, Dan Carey, Maggie Herman, Tom Wells, Kevin Kowitz, Tony Baysmore, Christy Tasker, Charlie Brittain, Linda Percy

Amy Mantay started the meeting explaining her role as Main Street Manager for Reisterstown in the County Planning Office. She described what participation in a Main Street Program means to those attending the meeting for the first time. She said this is an approach to finding a way to keep Main Street relevant. She will help us to determine the niche we wish to fill. The past six weeks we have spent time working on a list of property owners, business owners, stakeholders and in January will start working on the committees needed to move forward to the next step.

Amy Menzer introduced herself as the Main Street Manager for Dundalk which is the only approved Baltimore County area in the Main Street Maryland program. They were designated in 2004 and while there are some similarities their area is smaller in terms of the total number of storefronts. As we introduced ourselves, she could see that we have a nice mix of property owners, business owners and interested community members. Their designated area is focused around a shopping center from the 1920's and they have found the challenge to be attracting viable businesses and getting customers to come there so the businesses succeed. There are a few core businesses and it is very walk able . However, in today's society, most people drive and it is very easy to drive past without noticing all it has to offer.

She was asked to explain some of the positives of participating in the program. First, she said that it is a non-profit formed out of a UDAT so advocacy for a broader area. They will buy houses and renovate them to bring people to the area who can be potential visitors and shoppers to support a more vibrant retail. Secondly, she said the clean, safe and green project is part of a broader group. So, it is one piece of their non-profit group. Third, they used a positive approach of choosing an "exemplary home" complimenting the owner on their efforts rather than saying negatives of those that need improvement. Amy said that because the shopping center property has 75% of it owned by one entity there can be issues getting changes to occur while we may have a better chance with more individual owners. Because there are parks bookending the shopping center, it is hard to see and people have to come there because they are aware of its location. To attract people, they hold a farmers market on Saturday mornings from 7am – noon run by the Chamber for the past decade. They also hold other events trying to turn the days into "Super Saturdays" such as a Fall Festival for the past 5 years which now can see from 1,000 – 1,500 people. They have trick-or-treating during Halloween where they give the candy to the shop owners to hand out which encourages people to visit the stores. At holiday time, they have a "cookie tour" where the shop owners hand out different types of cookies and this is usually held on the

opening day of the train garden. They decorate the area during the holiday season to encourage people to come and shop. They have a street fair that they call "holiday hoopla" where the street is closed to traffic.

Calvin asked her if they have old homes converted to businesses as we have many and they often run into code issues due to the age of the homes (over 100 years old). If so, did they have any success. As discussion continued phrases were mentioned such as "form based code," "overlay," "zoned to story," and "tax increment financing district." Amy Mantay said that as we meet in early 2013 she hopes to have information regarding the best way to help with outside and inside of the old buildings as well as ingress and egress to the properties which have been issues holding property owners back in the past trying to rent their properties. We will look at the federal, state and county implications and any possible tax credits that can assist the owners. Amy Menzer said that she grew up in Rockville and was interested to find out how they have been able to handle the issue since they have many old homes that have been converted to business uses such as legal offices. So, how do they handle design standards.

Paul asked her to speak about how they obtain and use their money in Dundalk. Amy said there are different pots of money. They were able to get money to support one year for the cost of a Main Street Manager. There are various state programs to which you can apply and being designated in the Main Street program does give a lift to winning those pots. She said they got money to redo their website, there is a façade improvement program which matches funds for the property or business owner. In their situation, it has been tricky to get the information to the new people before they spent their own money without being aware of the program. We discussed how important communication will be for us.

Brad Reter spoke to the group from the perspective of safety on Main Street. He spoke of a recent incident when the Citgo station which can be seen from his property was robbed with the armed robbers running away on foot. We discussed how a higher police presence would help make people feel safer more than scare people away from shopping. Another person told the story of a robbery of a shop by knife point on Super Saturday a year ago. Mary talked about the Citizens on Patrol program and encouraged everyone to call the police whenever you notice something so they have a record and can look for a pattern even when you aren't positive something has happened. Officer Krueger attends the monthly ROG Coordinating Council meeting and after his report for the month might be asked by a community group member if he knows anything about a particular incident. He may have nothing to say if the people involved didn't call 911 because they were afraid to bother the police. Tony said that since Kevin Kamenetz became the County Executive there has been tremendous improvement technologically. You can now go online and submit a report if you don't have time to call immediately but are bothered by something. Outreach officers do keep records and reports are run monthly. Brad said that he has no problem calling a police officer to escort him to his car if he sees people just parked outside after closing. We have to remember they are there to help us. We will certainly make sure a police representative is part of the Clean, Safe, Green committee.

Amy was asked if they have any problems in Dundalk. She said they have had issues with loitering and pan handling complaints from business owners. She was asked about parking issues. She said that they

do have parking on the street and there are lots behind the shops. However, they are now experiencing an issue because the shopping center was sold last year while the original owner still owns the parking lots and has posted signs saying cars will be towed. They are trying to resolve the problem currently. She said that it is very important to get business owners involved and for them to take leadership roles in the group.

Mary told Amy Mantay that the website page for Reisterstown Main Street Program on the Baltimore County webpage looked really nice. You can visit the site at

<http://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/Agencies/planning/neighborhoodresponse/reisterstown/index.html>

The meeting was adjourned at 11:20am

The next meeting will be held at Reter's Crabhouse, Monday, January 7, 2013 at 10am.